Melbourne Beethoven Orchestra

Figaro, Unfinished, and Fate

Concert Program

9 March

Collins Street Baptist Church

Acknowledgement of Country

The MBO respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we meet and hold this performance today, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation. The MBO would also like to pay respects to Elders past, present, and emerging.

We also acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of the lands across Victoria and Australia, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures, and heritage, and we recognise the continuing sovereignties of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

Artists

Melbourne Beethoven Orchestra

Yuki Goh conductor

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The Marriage of Figaro Overture [5']

Franz Schubert

Symphony No. 8 in B Minor, “Unfinished” [26']

~Intermission~

Ludwig Van Beethoven

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor [35']

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes including intermission
Timings listed are approximate

For the consideration of the performers and your fellow audience members, please switch your phone to silent mode or off.

Musicians

First Violins

Sarah Chang
Concertmaster
Samuel Li
Jasmine Rou
Daniel Bian
Chereen Ng

Second Violins

Stephanie Cho

Russell Liao

Faye Ma

Julia Vu

Nick Wang

Violas

Tian Tian Lan

Darius Goh

Richard Yu

Cellos

Eric Wang

Wendy Wang

Gabe Chan

Annabel Hsu

Zio Zhu

Double Basses

Theodore Pham

Pui Lam Lo

Zimo Zhu

Flutes

Callie Stavrou

Sam Maneesuwan

William Ashley

Piccolo

Sam Maneesuwan

Oboes

Annabel Lam

Allan Liang

Clarinets

Jessica Chung

Tom An

Bassoons

Ethan Borg

April Ward

Horns

Nick Yu

Homer Choi

Trumpets

Sasha Saad

Emma O’Brien

Trombones

Maeve Tan

Alto

Sam Daffy

Tenor

Finnlay Hansen

Bass

Timpani

Tom Lin

Melbourne Beethoven Orchestra

A note from the Orchestra Manager, Theodore Pham.

Established over dinner in 2024, the Melbourne Beethoven Orchestra is a not-for-profit ensemble dedicated to providing musicians across Melbourne the opportunity to perform works primarily from the Classical era. Captivated by the works of Beethoven, this orchestra is a bit of a passion project of mine, and I hope I can continue to keep this orchestra alive, bringing wonderful music to you, our audience.

With our inaugural concert celebrating the works of Mozart, Schubert, and Beethoven, I sincerely thank you for supporting this new orchestra, and I hope we can offer you a sublime afternoon of orchestral music.

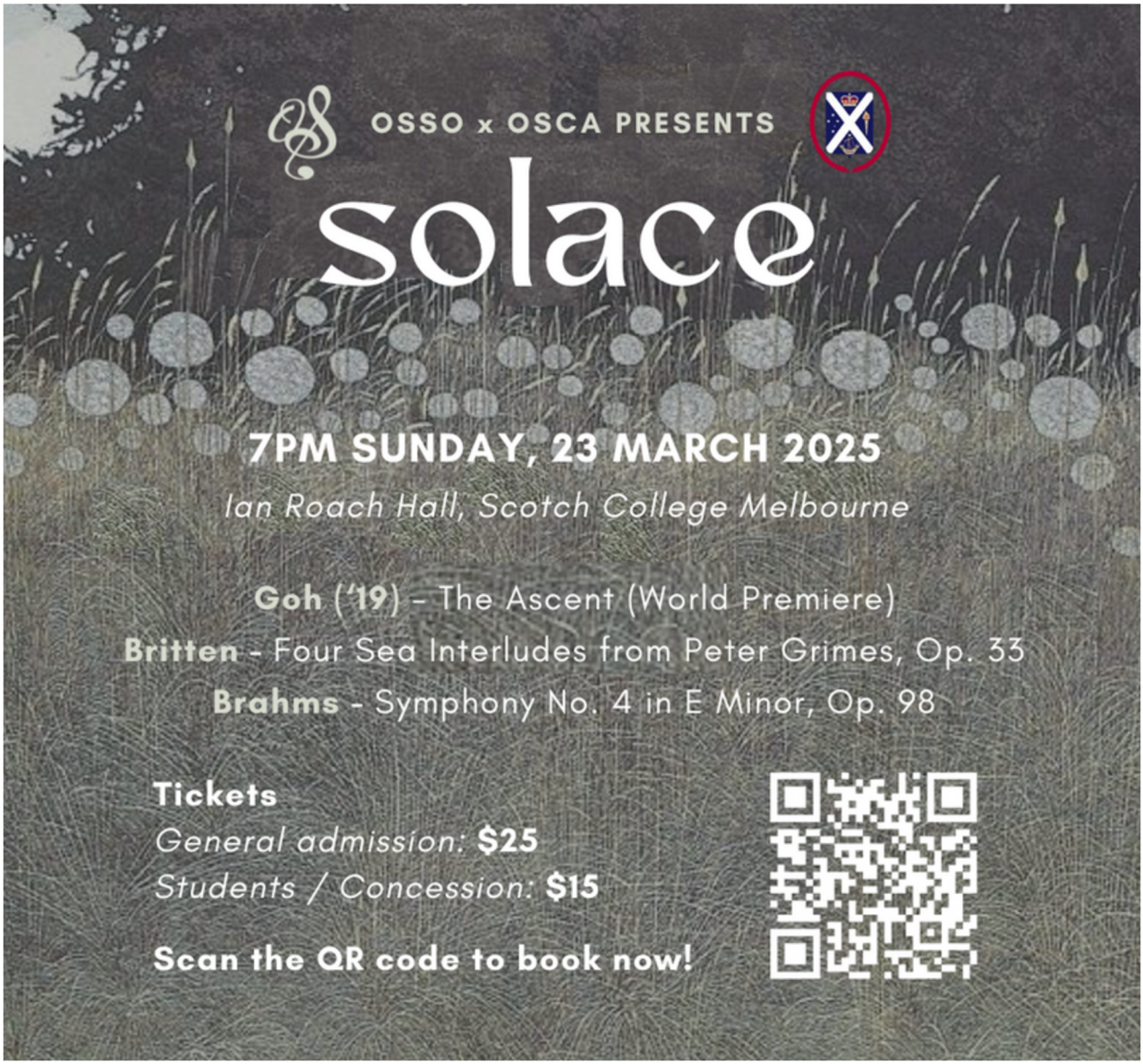
Theodore Pham
Orchestra Manager - MBO

Yuki Goh - conductor

Yuki is currently in his first year of the Doctor of Dental Surgery at the University of Melbourne. He graduated with a Bachelor of Music (Honours) from the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music in 2024, majoring in Composition, as well as a Diploma in Languages in 2023, majoring in Latin. He was the recipient of the Catherine Grace McWilliam Prize and the IgniteLAB Faculty of Fine Arts and Music Award in 2024, awarded to outstanding students in the final year of the Bachelor of Music. He is currently the conductor of the Melbourne Beethoven Orchestra, the Melbourne University Biomedicine Students' Orchestra (MUBSO), the Old Scotch Symphony Orchestra (OSSO), as well as the Assistant Conductor of the Heidelberg Symphony Orchestra.

Yuki's musical journey began in classical instrumental performance, having attained proficiency in piano, viola, and harp. He commenced his studies in orchestral conducting in 2019 under the tutelage of Dr John Ferguson. That same year, he made his debut at a combined schools orchestra charity concert, a concert organised by students which raised over $4000 for the Skyline Foundation. He has been involved in conducting engagements with other student orchestras ever since. His other mentors include Nicholas Bochner, Christopher Kopke, and Rick Prakhoff.

As a former composition student at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, Yuki is a composer of over 40 works. He has studied under the tutelage of Stuart Greenbaum, Melody Eötvös, Miriama Young, Timothy Dargaville, and Christine McCombe. Notable premieres of his works include that of his orchestral piece After Rain Comes the Rainbow, performed by MUBSO in 2022, his percussion piece Time Stop, performed by the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music Percussion Ensemble under the direction of Brent Miller, and his piano trio Trio of Ice, performed by the Ice Cube Trio. He has also had the privilege of workshopping and recording his mixed sextet Where the Quiet Things Are with the Syzygy Ensemble. His latest orchestral work The Ascent will be premiered by the Old Scotch Symphony Orchestra in March 2025. Find the details to Yuki's premiere below.


OSSO x OSCA PRESENTS
solace
7PM SUNDAY, 23 MARCH 2025
Ian Roach Hall, Scotch College Melbourne
Goh ('19) - The Ascent (World Premiere)
Britten - Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes, Op. 33
Brahms - Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98
Tickets
General admission: $25
Students / Concession: $15
Scan the QR code to book now!

Program Notes

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756 - 1791)

The Marriage of Figaro - Overture, K.492

The Marriage of Figaro is an opera buffa based on the play La Folle Journée, ou Le Mariage de Figaro by French playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarche. Written before the French Revolution, the play was banned by monarchs in many European cities for its satirical depiction of the aristocracy and the portrayal of servants rebelling against their masters. The libretto to Mozart's opera, written by Lorenzo Da Ponte, strips away some of the political commentary of the play, but nevertheless maintains its core themes of social rebellion and power imbalances. The Marriage of Figaro was Mozart's first of three operatic collaboration with Da Ponte, the other two operas being Don Giovanni and Cosi fan tutte. The opera was completed in six weeks, with the overture composed only two days before its premiere in Vienna, 1786. Whilst the overture does not contain any of the themes heard throughout the opera, it serves its function of establishing the opera's sparkling mood and playful vitality. Written in modified sonata form, this taut, four-minute overture is a relentless wave of scurrying energy, mercurial shifts in mood, sudden explosions of sound, all enveloped in an atmosphere of comedy and chaos. Hushed, conspiratorial whispers begin in the strings and bassoons before being taken up by an energetic theme in the entire orchestra. The cheery, whimsical mood persists without rest with each new theme introduced, culminating in a coda that builds in excitement towards a triumphant close.

Franz Schubert

(1797 - 1828)

Symphony No. 8 in B minor, D.759 "*Unfinished*"

I. *Allegro moderato*

II. *Andante con moto*

The reasons why Franz Schubert left his B minor symphony unfinished remain one of the most intriguing mysteries in Western Classical music. Scholars have theorised that Schubert had entered a period of self-criticism, having felt overshadowed and burdened by Beethoven's mammoth contribution to symphonic and dramatic innovation, and hence in the later part of his tragically short life, he composed and abandoned various musical fragments and sketches of works, including the "Unfinished" Symphony. The manuscript of the symphony consisted of two superbly crafted movements and nine measures of a fully orchestrated scherzo followed by blank pages. A typical performance of the work features only the two completed movements, which have enthralled audiences for their innovation in form, as well as a calculated blend of lyrical beauty and emotional drama. The first movement begins in the dark depths – a low, brooding introductory theme in the cellos and basses, followed by anxious semiquavers in the violins above which a soaring melancholic theme is introduced by oboe and clarinet. Loud chords interrupt the already-tense atmosphere before the music crescendos to a climax, then gently subsides into the symphony's most iconic theme – a reserved and tuneful waltz played by the cellos before being taken up by the violins. Instead of building towards a point of arrival, this theme seems to lose its train of thought, fading into silence before a dramatic orchestral outburst of anger and frustration. The exposition resumes with further development of the waltz theme – fragmental and fugal treatment – before the ominous atmosphere of the opening resurfaces at the beginning of the development section. The development is primarily based on the introductory theme and is characterised by abrupt changes in dynamics and explosions of drama. The climax of this section features the introductory theme metamorphosed into a relentless march, punctuated by insistent dotted rhythms in the trumpets and timpani.

Once the tension eases, the music seems to regretfully transition to the recapitulation, which follows a similar structural route to the exposition. A lamenting coda then provides the movement with a tragic, resigned closure. Whilst the lyrical tranquillity of the Andante movement provides contrast and relief from the gloom of the first movement, that is not to say that the movement is free from tinges of melancholy and moments of emotional intensity. Written in modified sonata form, the second movement opens in an idyllic, carefree manner, giving way to a dreamy, songlike theme in the strings. A glorious brass and woodwind fanfare based on this first theme soon follows, before a haunting second subject – a soaring but tragic theme played by solo clarinet accompanied by hushed syncopated strings – turns the untainted tranquillity on its head. This tragic theme is then stated in full force by the whole orchestra after a violent fortissimo outburst. The initial idyllic atmosphere then returns in a lyrical transition passage, leading to the recapitulation and coda which brings the movement to a nostalgic and tranquil close.

Ludwig van Beethoven

(1770 - 1827)

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op.67 "*Unfinished*"

I. *Allegro con brio*
II. *Andante con moto*
III. *Scherzo. Allegro -*
IV. *Allegro - Presto*

"Secretly, in my heart of hearts, I still hope to be able to make something out of myself, but who can do anything after Beethoven?" (Franz Schubert to his friend Josef von Spaun) The revolutionary impact of Beethoven's music reverberated resoundingly throughout the history of Western Classical music, and his creative successors, including Franz Schubert, have been both inspired and intimidated by his shadow. Beethoven revolutionised virtually every form of Western Classical music in which he composed, but his most monumental impact was perhaps on the symphonic genre. His "Eroica" Symphony marked the onset of his radical transformation of the form, having expanded the dimensions of the individual movements, introduced new structural complexities, and imbued the form with a greater potential for emotional expression, paving the way towards the Romantic Period. The famous fifth symphony builds upon this transformation through its tight motivic integration, its overall emotional arc from struggle to triumph, and its expansion of orchestral forces, to name a few. The opening four notes of the work, often analogised to the idea of fate knocking at one's door, form part of what is perhaps the most iconic and famous introduction to any piece of Western Classical music. The fifth symphony was completed in 1808, and it could be said that the tragic and tense mood that permeates the work has parallels with Beethoven's personal circumstances during the time – his impending deafness shattered him to the core, Napoleon was marching over his homeland in Vienna, and he suffered financial difficulties. Music provided him an emotional outlet, served as a medium for him to channel his revolutionary spirit and to become the sole owner of his destiny.

The first movement, written in a concise sonata form, opens famously with the relentless ‘fate motif’ – three short quavers followed by a long, paused note. These four notes then form the basis for the entire movement, incessantly repeated and undergoing a persistent string of melodic and rhythmic transformation, whilst shaping the overall emotional journey of the movement. There are moments of restless anxiety, delicate beauty, ecstatic joy, and moments of obsessive repetition of this single germinal motif. The movement’s only moment of rest and halted action is the plaintively expressive oboe cadenza at a cadence point in the recapitulation, but the mood here nonetheless refuses to grant us any repose from the torrential rhythms and unyielding energy of the fate motif. The movement concludes with a resigned restatement of the tragic first theme before the fate motif explodes in full force at its closure, symbolising the defeat of good at the hands of evil.

The second movement features variations on a reposeful, songlike theme, introduced by cellos and violas, each subsequent variation becoming more elaborate and more rhythmically complex than the previous one. There is a devout, sincere quality to this theme, which is then answered by a slightly more assertive theme in the clarinets and bassoons. Moments of quiet tension are violently interrupted by brass march-like fanfares, and the substantial use of brass in this movement was, to some extent, a novelty in slow symphonic movements. Moments of vehemence follow moments of tenderness, and, below the surface of the music, allusions to the symphony’s ‘fate motif’ persist determinedly.

The quiet murmurs of the cellos and basses that open the scherzo movement hint at an atmosphere of secrecy and disquietude. That is until the horns enter boldly with the movement's main theme that is clearly derived from the 'fate motif.' The movement's trio fugato contains characteristics of revolutionary uprising or a communal call to action. A vigorous subject is introduced by cellos and basses, and one by one various sections of the orchestra answer and join the comical mayhem. The turmoil gradually subsides, and the return of the scherzo provides a stunning surprise – instead of the main theme being reprised in its initial forcefulness, it is now characterised by quiet pizzicato and distant woodwind entries, producing a spectral, mysterious atmosphere. This leads the movement into a dramatic pianissimo section, underpinned by murmuring timpani, above which the violins whisper fragments of the movement's opening melodic idea.

The music then charges without pause in a gradual, exhilarating crescendo into the triumphant chords that open the fourth movement, where the orchestra is joined by the novel sounds of trombones, piccolo and contrabassoon. With this new expansion of range in both pitch and instrumental colour, the movement charges forward in blazing glory, introducing a wealth of new themes in its sonata form fabric, some of them a clear reference to the rhythm of the 'fate motif.' Beethoven's heroic apotheosis is capped by a coda section of overwhelming ecstasy – unrelenting C major chords over a passage of at least twenty-nine bars lead to a victorious finish. Beethoven's fifth had an enduring impact on future generations of composers, who used the symphony as a model on which later symphonies of a struggle-to-victory trajectory were based. For young Schubert, who was only eleven years old at the time of its premiere, Beethoven's fifth marked the dawn of the future of classical music.

Melbourne Beethoven Orchestra

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